



Florida Association of Charter School Authorizers

Authorizer Support Action Plan

Background

For continuity and most importantly transparency, it should be noted the background section of the action plan is shared in both the Florida Association of Charter School Authorizers (FACSA) and the Colorado Association of Charter School Authorizers (CACSA) plans.

The Florida Association of Charter School Authorizers (FACSA) is part of the Tri-State Alliance to Improve District-Led Charter Authorizing (Alliance). The Alliance is supported by a three-year, \$2.6 million National Dissemination grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Charter School Program. The primary goal of this grant in Florida is to improve authorizing practices by school districts. This document, the *FACSA Authorizer Support Action Plan*, outlines proposed steps FACSA will pursue, independently and in partnership with other groups, to advance this goal in the second and third years of the project. Additional project goals that address student equity, increasing FACSA membership by small and rural districts, and support similar efforts in other states are addressed in separate documents.

This grant supports three years of work by FACSA. The first year of work required FACSA to study authorizers' needs and to plan for work to support authorizers during years 2 and 3 of the grant. According to the grant, that plan is to identify four model materials that will be created and four professional learning opportunities that will be provided during these years. The first year of work is wrapping up on September 30, 2019, and this Action Plan addresses steps to be taken between October 1, 2019, through September 30, 2021.

This plan is based on the *FACSA Authorizer Needs Assessment* that was produced in the spring and summer of 2019. The Needs Assessment was produced under contract by Margaret Lin and included analysis of data from a FACSA created survey of Florida authorizers, interviews with authorizer representatives, and an analysis of resources that are currently available. The Needs Assessment was shared with FACSA members who provided electronic feedback and participated in an in-person workshop on July 25th. At that workshop the findings of the *Needs Assessment* were discussed and considerations for the creation of the primary documents were addressed. comments on the *Catalogue of Available Resources* were solicited online, and input was accommodated into the final *Needs Assessment*. The *Needs Assessment*, a *Catalogue of Available Resources*, and notes on the July 25, 2019 workshop are available.

The remainder of this document first presents the model materials that will be produced. It describes the models, or "tools", and includes the timeline for their creation, potential partners and strategies to create and vet each, as well as considerations about each tool that were raised in the needs assessment process. This section will include a description of potential partnerships that may allow FACSA to

support the creation of additional materials, beyond the expected four documents, without FACSA needing to take primary responsibility for creating such materials. The following section will then address the learning opportunities, including both those convened by FACSA, as well as those hosted by other organizations that may be useful. It will also outline the major topics to be addressed, forums, and potential partners.

1) Model Materials

Objective 1.1d: By the end of year 3, each state will have created a total of 4 or more new highest-need resources.

FACSA is required to create a total of four model materials by the end of year three. Two are to be completed in year two and the remaining in year three. After evaluating the needs assessment, it is clear there is an opportunity to bundle some of the priorities to create a consolidated package of essential and related model materials that combines more than one identified need. Many Florida Authorizers already use some form of template that address each of the model materials that were identified. However, the need is to standardize the tool in order to streamline processes and requirements that can be used across the state. With so many CMO and EMO's opening and/or operating schools across the state, it would be useful to both operator and authorizer to work from a model tool that meets statutory requirements and satisfies authorizer's needs. It is the intention of this plan to identify the priority model materials, identify partners that may be able to assist in the creation of the tools, and to leverage existing materials currently used across the state.

Based on the Needs Assessment, the recommended materials are listed in order of priority below:

- 1) A consolidated package of materials will be created in year two to address two related priorities identified among the top ten; 1. the annual evaluation rubric of a charter school's performance and 2. the annual report to the school communicating and documenting that evaluation;
- 2) Also, in year two, an annual opening operations checklist for authorizers to use at the beginning of each new school year to confirm that all activities necessary for opening the charter school are completed before the school begins operations with students attending (completed in year 2);
- 3) A consolidated package of materials that include rubrics or other relevant standardized tools to measure and address renewal standards, the contract renewal process, and the review process for the school's performance (completed in year three); and
- 4) A "Year Zero" road map to navigate authorizers through the essential activities that are required after a charter application is approved and before the school begins operations (completed in year 3).

A. Annual Evaluation Rubric and Report to Charter School

A consolidated suite of materials that communicate the charter school's academic performance, finance, and operations is the top priority for Florida Authorizers. The materials will consist of an annual report and rubric to be used to evaluate the charter school's compliance and performance standards which are linked to the model contract and Florida statute. Annual reports will be used to support the contract

renewal process and the five-year high-stakes review required by statute. In addition, the annual report will be an invaluable resource for providing feedback and interventions to schools that may be experiencing problems.

It is the expectation to leverage current rubrics and annual reports that are already being used in some Florida districts and to create a standard model that can be used across the state.

Ultimately, the intention of these tools is to provide constructive performance feedback that will drive efforts to promote school improvement and opportunities for growth. In addition, both the rubric and report should contain elements that create an increasing awareness of student equity and school quality in order to better inform the authorizer's high stakes decision making, and most importantly, district and school stakeholders understanding of the school's performance overall. The rubric will include information that will require schools to self-report, but it will also include data gathered by the authorizer that is easily collected from district and state sources. Similarly, to CACSA's intent for the rubric, FACSA shares the same desired outcomes when using the tool, "this information can inform high stakes decisions, like renewal; trigger tiered interventions; and support school improvement; and deepen public understanding."

B. Annual Opening Operation Checklist

The second priority is the development of an annual opening operation checklist for authorizers to use at the beginning of each new school year to confirm that all activities necessary for opening the charter school are completed before the school begins operations with students attending. The checklist should be created in concordance with Florida statutory requirements for the annual opening of charter schools.

C. Renewal Package

The third priority is a suite of tools to be used during the contract renewal process. The tools should be created in alignment with the annual report and criterion based rubric. The annual report should inform high stakes decision making when evaluating a charter school for renewal.

When developing the tools and processes for renewal, it is important to consider a differentiated approach to evaluating the high-performing charter versus non-high-performing. The process for a high-performing charter school renewal may be tailored to adjust the rigor of analysis required to renew the contract.

Leveraging current processes that work and meet the needs expressed by Florida authorizers, will be the primary sources for beginning development.

D. Year Zero Guide

The fourth priority is a "Year Zero Guide" that acts as a roadmap to navigate authorizers through essential activities that are required after a charter application is approved and before the school begins operations. Statutory requirements and current district processes will drive the development of this tool

and will include tasks that are considered best practices across districts. An implementation timeline and district resources, including district offered professional development opportunities should be included in the materials (i.e. technical training for Student Information Systems). In addition, the timeline should identify triggers resulted from issues that prompt enforceable actions, if-then options for addressing issues, and process management strategies for ensuring the best possible outcomes.

Table 1. FACSA Created Model Materials

Item	Timeline	Format	Notes
Annual evaluation rubric and report	Year 2, first product	Package including rubric and report	Consider current Florida templates
Annual Operation Checklist	Year 2, second product	Checklist	Start of School Year---existing schools only Use current FL templates.
Renewal package	Year 3, first product	Package including guidance, standards, and tools	Consider national collaboration with CACSA and CCAP
Year Zero Guide	Year 3, second product	Guide with timelines and guidance on what must be accomplished and when	Explore predictions of enrollment and accommodate policy and legal issues

2. Addressing NACSA’s 12 Essential Practices

Objective 1.3: By the end of the grant period, there will be a 5% increase in the number of districts in each of our states that either comply with 10 or more of NACSA’s 12 essential practices or, if a state-specific measuring tool is more appropriate, that comply by a similar proportion according to the state-specific metric.

Eight of the twelve Essential Practices have been adopted by less than 80% of Florida authorizers. Annual reports and published mission statements ranked the among lowest, with only 42% of Florida authorizers who have published mission statements and only 37% who produce annual reports for their charter schools. The Annual Report and rubric materials referenced above in the Model Materials section should support an increase of authorizers who adopt this practice. 74% of authorizers have established revocation criteria and only 58% have established renewal criteria. By creating renewal criterion-based rubrics this should also increase the number of authorizers who adopt framework for contract revocation and renewals.

- A. Annual Reports and Rubrics;
- B. Published Mission Statements; and
- C. Renewal and Revocation Criteria

A. Annual Reports and Rubrics

By creating a standardized template to provide charter schools an annual report and a criterion-based rubric, it is anticipated that an increase of Florida authorizers will adopt this NACSA Essential Practice.

B. Published Mission Statements

A NACSA Essential Practice is to adopt a mission statement or board resolution in support of high-quality authorizing practices. Based on survey data, this is a practice that is not widely adopted in Florida. The adoption of a board resolution is more likely than a mission-statement for district authorizers, as their missions are much broader than charter schools. Connected to board resolutions, districts do adopt charter policies that drive their approach to charter applicants and existing charter schools.

C. Renewal and Revocation Criteria

To increase the number of Florida authorizers who have established criterion for contract renewals and revocations, the annual report, renewal tools, and model materials will be created to provide a standardized template and recommended criteria.

Table 2. Materials Created by Districts & Partners

Topic/Material	Partner or Leverage Strategy	FACSA Role
Annual Reports and Rubrics	Current district templates, exemplars, NACSA	Solicit documents and best practices from districts
Published Mission Statements	NACSA’s 12 Essential Practices	Solicit input from districts who have adopted a mission statement for quality authorizing;
Renewal and Revocation Criteria	Current district templates, exemplars, NACSA	Solicit documents and best practices from districts

3. Professional Learning Opportunities

Objective 1.2b: By the end of year 3, each state will have offered the Professional Learning opportunities 4 or more times to the target audience of districts and small/rural authorizers.

By the end of the grant, each state is required to develop and deliver four Professional Learning opportunities. These opportunities should address and support goal two of the grant which is to improve access, services, and outcomes for students with disabilities. They will also take into account small districts that with limited resources for travel and will be strategically developed to offer ease of access to the materials and instruction.

These Professional Learning Opportunities, will include both in-person meetings and virtual and technology assisted forums, as well as dissemination and learning opportunities that may be available to FACSA by working in partnership with the meetings and forums convened by partners.

A. FACSA Convened Meetings and Events

Monthly FACSA Meetings: These meetings promote face-to-face interaction and allow for authorizers to get updates on FACSA activities, as well as to engage in workshops and open forum discussions on a variety of topics each month. FACSA will continue these throughout the project, and will work to include increasing numbers of authorizers, with a focus on recruiting small rural districts. Using a variety of formats, such as consultancies, workshops, and panels, all FACSA materials will be shared and participants will be able to deepen their understanding and ability to apply these tools through these meetings.

FACSA Workshops: FACSA will support specialized workshops on particular topics. These will be half-day or full-day and will be based on authorizer needs and priorities identified above.

Webinars: in addition to in-person meetings, FACSA will convene webinars to promote interaction. These webinars will also create opportunities for the three state partners to work together at low cost. In Year 1, webinars were convened that discussed state appeals commissions that pre-evaluate appeals in Florida, and to debrief policy developments in the three states. Webinars provide a low-cost strategy to provide learning opportunities that also reduce burden for participation among isolated and more distant authorizers.

Observations and Visits: FACSA members requested opportunities to visit their peers, and to observe their authorizing work. Based on the availability of host authorizers, other charter liaisons could observe their peers conducting various activities, such as Capacity Interviews, Board Trainings, initial meetings with potential charter applicants, or staff presentations to school boards on charter applications. FACSA could also support this peer-to-peer sharing by sharing videos of such events. In addition to the specific events, FACSA could schedule visits with the staff in authorizing offices. These learning opportunities could be supported by gathering material from the exemplars on these practices, which would be distributed through the on-line archive. This strategy will be shared between the three states in the Alliance.

Table 3. FACSA Professional Learning Opportunities

Event	Frequency /Number	Audience	Format
FACSA Monthly Meetings	Monthly	All authorizers statewide	All day forum on broad agenda, including topical workshops and open forum discussions
FACSA Workshops	2/year	FACSA members and recruits	Half-day and full-day workshops on a single topic
Webinars on Issues of Practice	6/year	All authorizers statewide, focus on topics of interest to small and rural authorizers (available to national partners)	On-line forums, including interactive webinars

Observations and Authorizer Visits	Depending on exemplars' availability	Smaller groups of authorizers, including individual authorizers	Facilitating opportunities to observe work or meet with colleagues
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